

# **BSHS**

## **SPEECH AND DEBATE**

*2023 – 2024 Handbook*



**DRIVE • PASSION • COMMITMENT • LEADERSHIP**

**“It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent”**

**— Madeleine K. Albright**

**More Information/Primary Contacts:**

**Head Coach: Kristina McGee:** [kmcgee@mcpsmt.org](mailto:kmcgee@mcpsmt.org)

**Our Website:** <https://www.mcpsmt.org/domain/385>

Or check out the practice schedule And drop in to learn more!

BSHS Contact: 3100 South Ave W, Missoula, MT 59804 : (406) 728-2401

[NOTE: Please feel encouraged to reach out to the head coach (primary team contact) with any questions, comments, or concerns, and IF YOU WISH TO JOIN!!!



Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Speech and Debate Season! I am thrilled to introduce myself as your Head Coach for the Big Sky Speech and Debate team. My name is Kristina McGee, and this marks the beginning of my journey as your coach. I'm excited to lead this talented group of students and see our team thrive this season.

For those of you new to Speech and Debate, there are many events to choose from! Some are partner events and others are independent but we are always a team. There is a complete list of events available on the Big Sky High School website under activities and then Speech and Debate. My coaching staff and returning students are happy to help find your event! Senior students in speech events can double enter, sorry to my debaters but you can't!

My primary aim is to guide students in nurturing and enhancing their individual talents, especially in areas such as speaking, writing, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership. To foster a strong team dynamic, I expect all students to meet the minimum practice and competition requirements. Through these shared experiences, we can collectively build a robust and successful program. It's worth noting that Big Sky Speech and Debate boasts a rich tradition of not just excelling in competitions but also in upholding our core student values and behaviors.

I also want to emphasize that no student should be barred from participating in Speech and Debate due to financial concerns or other circumstances. Please talk to me and we can try to figure out a way to make it work for your student! Speech and Debate is an exciting and wonderful opportunity for students and we want to encourage as many as possible to join our team.

There is a wealth of important information and expectations in this document, so please read it carefully before signing. Signing the last page is a condition of participation and should be returned promptly. I strongly encourage parents to actively engage in various ways, such as fundraising, contributing to our snack list for tournaments, assisting with bulletin board decor and photos, and volunteering for our home meet, especially as we'll be hosting the state competition this year. We will regularly send out requests and reminders, so please stay vigilant. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to work with your students and look forward to an exciting season ahead. Our informational meeting for interested individuals is scheduled for late September, and practices commence on October 2nd. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out via email. Your support is invaluable to our program.

Sincerely,  
Coach McGee

## **Tentative 2023/24 Schedule\***

This is a TENTATIVE meet schedule, open to change at any time. Please do not plan on these locations until a final decision is received and confirmed by your coaches! BSHS Speech and Debate reserves the right to modify this schedule at any time which is to be adjudicated by BSHS Admin.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Event</b>
10/28/2023	Sat.	Corvallis Invite
11/4/2023	Sat.	Kalispell Kickoff
11/10/2023	Fri.	Bozeman
11/11/2023	Sat.	Bozeman
12/1/2023	Fri.	East Helena, Helena, & Carroll
12/2/2023	Sat.	East Helena, Helena, & Carroll
12/8/2023	Fri.	Kalispell Invite
12/9/2023	Sat.	Kalispell Invite
12/16/23	Sat.	Stevensville
01/5/2024	Fri.	Billings Skyview Invite (or out of State Tournament?)
01/6/2024	Sat.	Billings Skyview Invite (or out of State Tournament?)
01/12/2023	Fri.	Butte Invite
01/13/2023	Sat.	Butte Invite
01/26/2024	Fri.	STATE @ Missoula
01/27/2024	Sat.	STATE @ Missoula
02/09/2024	Fri.	NSDA @ Helena
02/10/2024	Sat.	NSDA @ Helena

## **Tentative 2023-2024 Practice and Meet Requirements**

MHSA requires that ALL participants have attended a minimum of 10 full practices in order to compete in any tournament. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Practices will run Monday-Thursday each week between 4:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Upon the coach's availability practice may run until 7:00 pm on select nights. Speech competitors are required to attend four hours of practice each week, and Debate competitors are required to attend six hours of practice each week. Holiday practices are TBD at this time and will be communicated with competitors in advance.

Competitors are required to be productive at practice for that practice to count towards their weekly quota. In addition, participants are required to follow expectations given by the coaching staff including deadlines. If it is deemed by coaches that students are not competition ready they may be pulled from that meet. Every event is different and it is almost impossible to list all items necessary to be ready for weekly tournaments.

Competitors are required to attend a minimum of six of eight competitions throughout the season. However, it is highly suggested to attend all competitions to be able to take as much feedback to support individual pieces and the team as a whole.

Failure to meet these requirements may result in ineligibility for competitions and exceptions may be made by coaches discretion. We are aware that things happen and there are excusable reasons for missing an event such as grade-dependent school functions, illness, etc. It is ultimately the responsibility of the student to balance the activities in which they choose to participate and meet the requirements within those activities. Students are expected to contact Coach McGee in case of any specific or situational questions through Remind.

Our first practice of the year is October 2nd at 4:15 p.m. in Room 51. All students who are participating are expected to attend this meeting as coaches will need to assist in the decision of initial events for students. Parents are more than welcome to attend this meeting as well if they would like to meet assistant and volunteer coaches.

## Additional Participation Requirements

1. **Required Forms** - These forms must be turned in to the Activities Secretary in the Attendance Office. Students will not officially be on the team roster and cannot practice/compete until all forms are turned in. Please fill out all forms ASAP! The only form not required is the Physical Examination - you do not need to receive a physical.
  - a. Medical Information and Insurance
    - i. Both sides of this must be filled out and signed by a parent or guardian in order for a student to get on the bus or compete. Make sure to include medical insurance company and policy # information.  
Insurance can be purchased through the school if needed.
  - b. Risk Disclosure Agreement
  - c. Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct
  - d. Season Activities Code of Conduct - Students DO NOT have to have a doctor's physical.
  - e. Concussion Fact Sheet
  - f. Signed Handbook Acknowledgment Form
2. **Required Fees** - Paid to the Activities Secretary in the Attendance Office. Fees should be paid at the same time as the required forms are turned in unless other arrangements are made. Pay your fees ASAP. You will not officially be "on the team" until your fees are paid!
  - a. \$60 Participation Fee
  - b. \$25 Activity Fee
  - c. \$30 White Fee
3. **COVID-19 Info** - In order to keep our team healthy throughout the season we'll be following all protective and preventative measures that MCPS has decided upon. We will also be required to follow all COVID policies/procedures by whatever host city, county, and school we are attending to compete in.
4. **Fundraising** - All team members are expected to assist in team fundraisers during the year, which are events organized by the coaches and/or parents. Team fundraising is essential to running the team, as well as providing additional materials such as spirit gear and tournament snacks/meals. This is a condition of participation.
5. **Tournament Dress Code** - Competitors are expected to wear professional clothes during competitions. These guidelines have flexibility but, this generally means no tennis shoes, no open-toed shoes, no jeans, no short skirts, and no blouses with revealing necklines, no distracting jewelry, makeup, or hair. Students DO NOT need to go out and spend a large amount of money on a new wardrobe. Instead, they should talk with their coaches and teammates to determine what clothes are most appropriate for their events. If you don't have the correct clothes, River of Life, Goodwill, or H&M are the best places to start looking. Many adults in life buy professional clothes for a specific time and only use them once or twice, leaving lots of good clothes

available. The team, prior to the first meet, often takes a bonding trip to the mall to help our new participants get an idea of what they need.

6. **Partner Events** - Students who enter partner events are required to have a secondary event either prepared or understand that if their partner is unable to travel they will be unable to compete. Debate competitors are unable to double-enter but are encouraged to prepare an additional performance and Speech competitors may double-enter.
7. **Team Captains** - BHS Speech and Debate team will have two-four team captains for the 2023 - 2024 season. We will have one captain for Speech and one for Debate. These are students who have participated in Speech and Debate for a minimum of one year. Being team captain means you are Caring, Courageous, and Consistent. You aren't afraid to fail but continuously do the best you can to make yourself better. As a team captain, you will help coaches plan any team bonding experiences throughout the season and be expected to run a short set of warm-ups and team meetings at the beginning of each meet. Interested students should reach out to Coach McGee.
8. **Cell Phones** - Students may keep cell phones for communication and timer purposes throughout the meet. Traditional timers are preferred at meets. However, students are not allowed to utilize cell phones during competition aside from a timer set in airplane mode. Students may lose the utilization of cell phones during a competition if their usage is inappropriate (eg. a student on their phone during another competitor's performance).
9. **All Other Applicable BSHS and MHSA Handbook Guidelines** – Expectations maintained by the MHSA as well as BSHS apply to all students participating in any school-sanctioned extracurricular event. As such, we encourage both students and parents to review the handbook(s) before signing the Handbook Acknowledgement Form, as the rules and regulations outlined there are also being acknowledged upon signing.
10. **State** - This year Missoula is lucky to be the host for the AA Speech and Debate tournament! This is an honor and a huge event that all students will be expected to help prepare for the week, and potentially weekend, before State. Students will also be expected to help with the state meet including but not limited to setting up, tearing down, finding judges, etc. More information on student expectations to come closer to the state tournament.
11. **Nationals** – Earning a place at the National Tournament is an immense honor, however, because it is not an MHSA-sanctioned tournament - we are on our own for fundraising all costs to attend. These efforts are TBD at this time as we are working with the district on a more long-term solution. It will be a mix of personal contributions and team fundraising. We are considering models from other activities and AA programs for our solution. Students are eligible for awards at Nationals through points earned by NSDA in service and speaking. This can be found on the NSDA webpage under student recognition.

## Travel Information

1. **Varsity & JV** - The “Varsity” and “JV” travel teams and designations are very fluid and will change at each tournament. Varsity determinations depend on commitment to the team, competitiveness, and the coach's discretion. Typically, most students have the opportunity to compete in Varsity at tournaments held in Missoula, Bozeman, and Kalispell. Beyond that, there may be some limits to who can compete at the Varsity level. Varsity tournaments, including State, usually limit us to a maximum of 4 competitors in each event (or 4 teams in partner events). Varsity tournaments will be the **ONLY** time students may ever be asked to enter a different event for the sake of maximizing participation as well as competitive potential.
2. **2023-2024 State Team** - In mid-January, when choosing the students selected for the 2023-2024 AA State Team, the coaches will set the roster based on who has best met the varsity expectations in addition to having the potential for competitive success at State. Some students may qualify to double-enter at state.
3. **Dropping a Tournament** - Students must make a commitment to attend a tournament by the date indicated by the coaching staff in advance which is determined by the registration/drop deadline by the tournament host. Coaches will assume that **ALL** team members are available to compete at **ALL** tournaments unless they have had a prior discussion with their coaches or have an unavoidable conflict (a medical issue, family emergency, etc.). Additionally, any student who commits to attending a tournament and drops out the week of the tournament will forfeit the privilege of attending the next scheduled Varsity tournament. This is to ensure that no one claims a travel spot and then back out, depriving another student of the opportunity to compete.
4. **Traveling** - We will typically leave for tournaments on Friday mornings and return late on Saturday evenings. Transportation is on buses provided by the district. The school will book and pay for the buses and the hotels in advance, but we will ask students to commit to attending a tournament a few weeks before in order to know how many hotel rooms to book, as well as to assist the tournament hosts in planning. The medical information cards are kept with the coaches at all times during tournaments. If your child should need medical assistance, we will take the appropriate action and will notify you immediately. If your child has specific health risks, medications they take, or dietary needs please make sure we are aware in advance. Because we travel as a team, if your child becomes ill and needs to return home, it will be your responsibility to come pick them up. The same is true for a violation of any rule, policy, code of conduct expectation, etc.
5. **Food** - Because tournaments are typically two full days, it is important that students take responsibility to stay well-fed and hydrated. They should eat breakfast at home, and we generally are provided breakfast at the hotel. That means that they should bring: Food or money for 2 lunches and 2 dinners. For those students who bring money, we will stop to pick up food on Friday, and, if decided upon by the coaching staff, again on Saturday evening. There will **NEVER** be a guarantee of this final stop,



so students are **HIGHLY ENCOURAGED** to bring snacks or entire meals, depending upon food availability at the tournament. The parent's group often provides team snacks that the coaching staff will send out sign-ups for in advance. We may fundraise for some meals throughout the season which is another important reason for students to make sure they are assisting their team in any way!

6. **Parent Group** - A robust parent group is essential to the success of Big Sky High School Speech and Debate as a team. The mission of the parent group is self-defined but generally means supporting the students on our team during the year, especially at a competition. For tournaments, the single largest contribution is helping to provide food and snacks for our students. Anyone interested in being a part of the parent group should opt-in on the handbook acknowledgment form. We will need lots of parental support for our state tournament!
7. **“Remind” Texting Application** –We will be using the Remind texting application and email to communicate with the team. We will communicate with parents via email. The Remind code will be given out to all participants during the first week of practice. Additionally, for reference, the coach's emails are provided on the cover page of this document.
  - a. Students can join the 2023-2024 Remind with this class link: @eaglesspe
8. **Bullying and Hazing-** There will be ZERO tolerance for bullying, hazing, or harassment of any kind on this team. This includes all forms of bullying including cyberbullying. We will treat all of our team members and competitors with respect in and out of rounds and practices. If you have any questions, or concerns, or would like to report any instance of bullying please EMAIL Coach McGee. An Email will allow us to have a record of any conversation if it becomes necessary. Thank you!
9. **PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM ON THE NEXT PAGE TO COACH MCGEE!!**



## Handbook Acknowledgment Form

I agree to follow all of the rules and expectations set out in the 2023-2024 Big Sky Speech and Debate Handbook, as well as those applicable rules and expectations from BOTH the MHSA and BSHS handbooks.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent Group

If you are interested in being a part of our parent group, please include your contact information below. While the coaches will already have access to parent/guardian contact information for safety reasons, families must opt-in for us to share that information with other families.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (cell or home): \_\_\_\_\_